



Ambassador Tatiana C. Gfoeller

Remarks
at the Celtic Aire Performance
February 2, 2010
Kurenkeyev College of Music, Bishkek



Thank you to the U.S. Air Force and the Transit Center at Manas for sending us an incredible band, Celtic Aire, to share with Kyrgyzstan!

Music transcends international borders – music can speak to the heart what words can't quite express. And Celtic music, music traditionally associated with Ireland, Wales, and Scotland, has a lot to say about my country, the United States of America.

Celtic music has been a part of American culture since the earliest days of European colonization of the New World. Roughly 15 percent of Americans can trace their ancestry back to Scotland, Ireland, or Wales. The early Irish, Scottish and Welsh immigrants often sought refuge in America from political oppression, religious persecution, and dire economic conditions. They faced a perilous voyage to the United States – scholars estimate that twenty to forty percent died en route. And once they arrived in the United States, they often faced discrimination and a difficult assimilation. However, they formed strong communities and managed to keep many of their traditions alive, including their traditional music. Over time, traditional Celtic

music had a significant impact on American music, especially American country music. During the last fifty years, Celtic music has enjoyed a revival in the United States, moving beyond the Celtic diaspora into the mainstream culture.

So, the history of how Celtic music came to America and changed America parallels the history of my country's founding – people from many different nations came to the United States in search of freedom of expression, religious tolerance, and liberty. Those early immigrants, much like the immigrants of the 21st century, made a lasting contribution to the character and traditions of America. That's why I am so proud that an American band is here today, saluting Celtic music and Scottish-Irish-Welsh immigrants' contribution to America. I hope you will enjoy this unique style of music.

Thank you!